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A man's guide to baking Learn

More men than ever are learning how to bake, says a new report. Professional pâtissier **Dean Brettschneider** shares his best recipes

There is absolutely no reason in the world why men can't grasp and master the basics of baking. Where men often go wrong is they are too heavy-handed, but in reality men often have a much better grasp of technically bringing all the components together — which is probably why there is such a rise in men baking. The Waitrose Cookery School has reported a rise of 350 per cent in men taking up their baking classes in the past two years, credited to master baker Paul Hollywood.

Rustic, slightly macho styles of baking, with big, bold flavours and interesting textures, are very trendy right now. There is nothing more satisfying than eating a piping hot, freshly baked pie, tart, quiche or even sausage roll straight out of the oven, brimming with various fillings enclosed in a buttery pastry.



I use sweet, short and puff pastry (the basic shortcrust recipe is below). Once you have mastered the basics, don't be scared to mix and match the pastries to suit yourself, as nothing is set in stone. The pie, tart, pastry and pasty recipes here are mostly based on traditional recipes, but have been given an unfamiliar twist.

When making the pastry, I recommend that you double or triple the recipe and divide it into smaller batches. Wrap each portion of pastry in clingfilm and place in the freezer until needed, then simply remove from the freezer and use as described in the recipe. It freezes exceptionally well, so make life easy and think ahead.

Of course, if you wish, you can use store-bought pastry, but it's part of the experience to make your own.

Happy baking.

Basic short pastry

Makes enough for one tart

Ingredients

160g standard plain flour
120g butter
Good pinch of salt
50ml cold water

Method

1 Place flour, butter and salt in a large mixing bowl. Using your fingertips, gently rub the ingredients together until they resemble rough breadcrumbs. Do not over-mix or the butter will begin to melt from the heat of your fingers.
2 Add water and mix until a dough is formed. Cover with clingfilm and refrigerate for 30 mins or overnight.
3 Gently rework the pastry before using, taking care to ensure it remains cold and firm. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the pastry into a sheet about 3mm thick or as stated in the recipe.

Melton Mowbray-style pork pies

Makes 4 medium pies

Ingredients

Pastry
225g lard
250ml water
500g standard plain flour, plus extra for dusting
1 tsp salt
Pork jelly
500ml shop-bought pork stock
3 tsp powdered gelatine (or 6 sheets leaf gelatine, softened in cold water)
Filling
500g pork shoulder, finely chopped into 5mm cubes
100g pork belly, skin removed, minced
55g lean bacon, finely chopped
½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

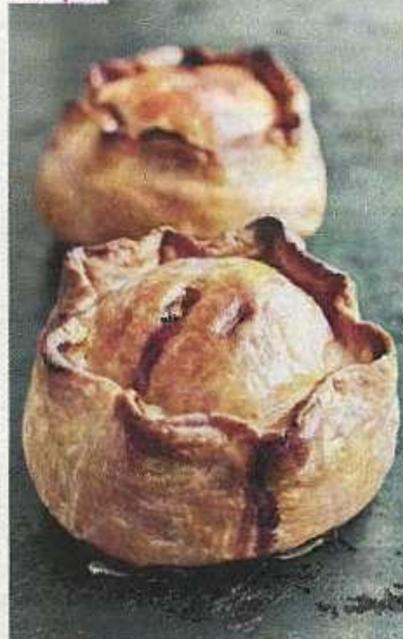
Glaze

1 egg beaten with 1 tbsp water, for egg wash

Method

1 Make hot water pastry the day before. Place lard and water in a small saucepan, and bring to the boil. Sift flour and salt into a large bowl. Make a well in the flour and pour in warm lard mixture. Mix well to combine, until mixture comes together to form a dough. Knead for a few minutes, then form into four 125g balls and four 30g balls. Cover with clingfilm and set aside in the refrigerator overnight.
2 Heat the pork stock until it is almost boiling, then stir in the gelatine. Set aside overnight in the refrigerator. Warm to a liquid prior to using.
3 For the pie filling, place the pork, pork belly, bacon and nutmeg in a large bowl and mix well with your hands. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cover with clingfilm and set aside in the refrigerator overnight.
4 Take the pastry balls out of the refrigerator and manipulate one large ball at a time with your hands to soften it, to form a circle 6cm in diameter.

Pork pies



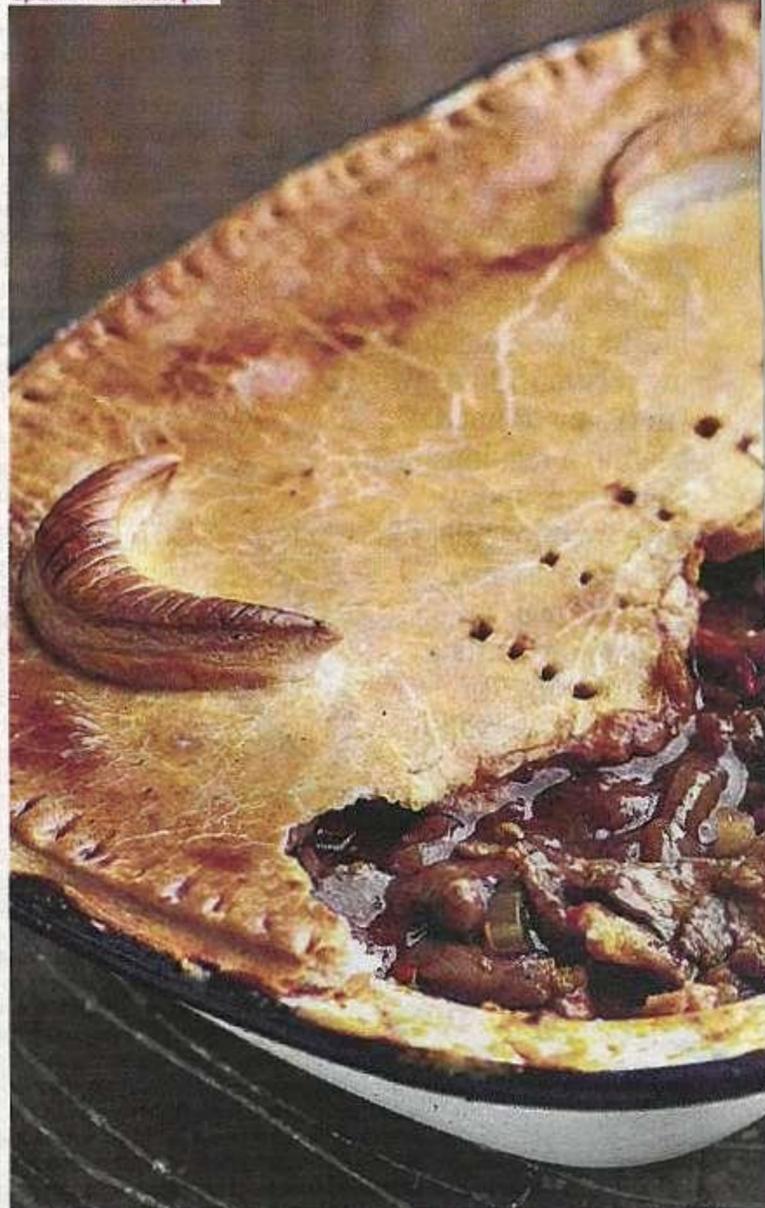
5 Once the pastry is soft, lightly dust the work surface with flour, take one ball at a time and press a small jam jar, approximately 6.5cm in diameter, into the pastry circle until you feel it hit the bottom and the outer edges rise naturally. Use your right thumb and fingers to raise the pastry up the side of the jar, turning it constantly with your left hand, pressing, pushing and raising the pastry up the sides of the jar until it's about 8cm in height. Gently slide your thumb between the pastry and the jar, slowly rotating the jar until the pastry case releases itself and comes away, leaving a pastry cup.

6 On a floured surface, roll out the smaller pastry balls to approximately 9cm-diameter circles, enough to cover each pastry case and filling as a lid. Cover with clingfilm and set aside.
7 Divide the pork pie filling into four equal portions, roll into balls and place one inside each pastry case. Brush the top inner parts of each pastry casing with some of the egg wash and place the pastry lids on top. Pinch the edges of the pastry to seal each pie, then push the pastry top edges inwards between your thumb and forefinger to create a crimped wavy top edge. Cut two pencil-sized holes in the top of each one, brush with the rest of the egg wash, then place the pies on a tray and put uncovered in the refrigerator overnight. This helps set the pastry.

8 The following day, remove the pies and place them on a baking paper-lined oven tray. Bake in a preheated oven set at 230C/gas 8 for 15 mins, then reduce the heat to 190C/gas 5 and bake for a further 1 hour 15 mins or until the pies are a dark golden brown all over.

9 Remove the pies from the oven and set aside to cool for 30 mins. You may have to recut the small holes in the top in order to pour in the pork jelly through a cone made from non-stick baking paper (you will need to heat the jelly gently to loosen it for pouring). Chill the pies in the refrigerator until the jelly is set.

Spanish chicken pie



Sausage, sun-dried tomato and potato tart

Makes a 22cm tart, serving 4-6 people

Ingredients

Pastry
1 quantity of basic short pastry (see left)
Filling
3 tbsp olive oil
3 onions, thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
3 tbsp water
200g waxy potatoes, peeled and chopped
350g best-quality fresh pork sausages
1 tbsp standard plain flour
2-3 tbsp tomato purée
12 sun-dried tomato halves in oil, chopped
1 tsp dried chilli flakes
2 tsp dried herbes de Provence
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
100g mascarpone

Method

1 Make basic short pastry and bring to room temperature, if necessary. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured surface, then use it to line a 22cm round tart tin (4cm deep). Prick the base, then chill or

Cornish pasty

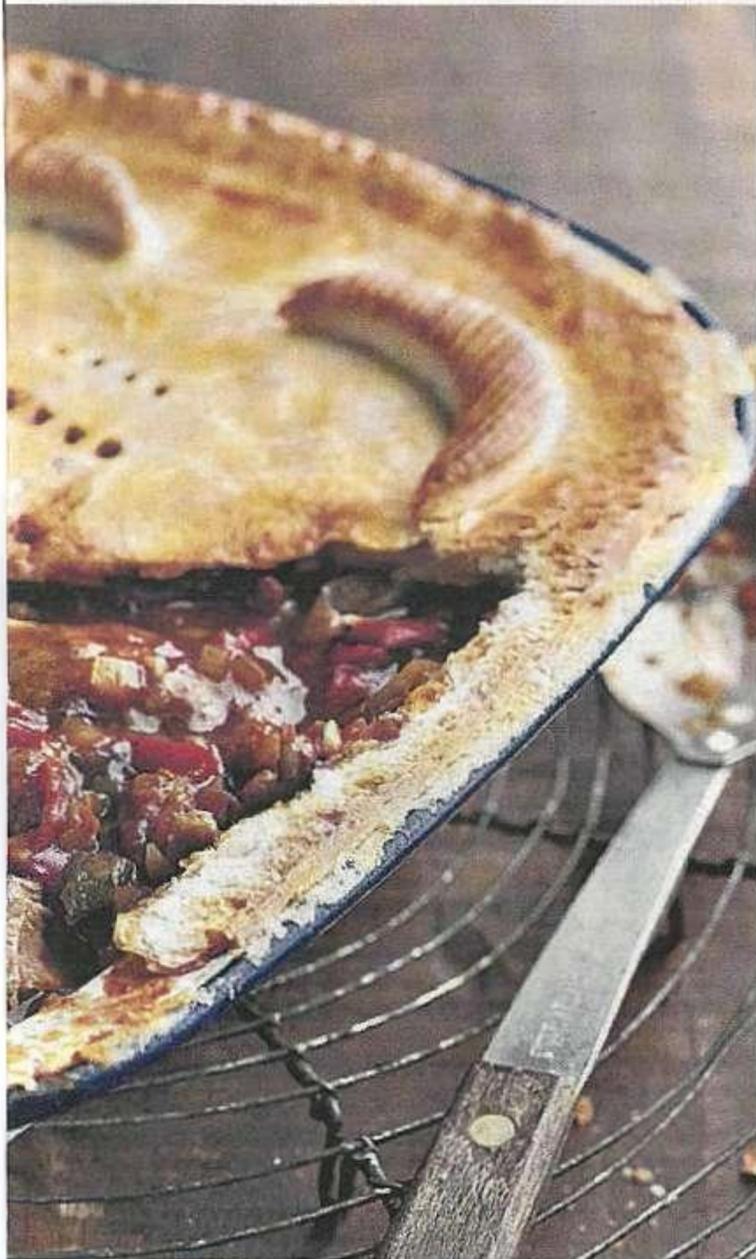


Sausage and tomato tart



to make pies, pasties and tarts

AARON HOLEN



Spanish chicken pie

Makes a large pie, serving 6 people

Ingredients

Pastry

100g prepared suet (available in the supermarket and normally blended with flour) or margarine

200g self-raising flour

4 tbsp white wine

Large pinch of salt

Filling

8 chicken thighs on the bone

Salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tbsp olive oil

Knob of butter

2 small red onions, chopped

2 stalks celery, chopped

2 red peppers, cored, deseeded and sliced

1 fennel bulb, sliced

8 cloves garlic, chopped

Good pinch of saffron

2 tsp paprika

1 large glass red wine, about 300ml

1 x 400g tin plum tomatoes

Glaze

1 egg, beaten, for egg wash

Method

1 Make the pastry by mixing the suet or margarine, flour, white wine and salt together in a large bowl until a soft dough forms. Add a little more flour if the dough is sticky, or wine if it is too dry. Knead the dough for a couple of minutes until it becomes smooth and a little elastic. Cover with clingfilm and allow to chill in the refrigerator.

2 Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the chicken pieces until they are slightly brown. Remove from the saucepan and set aside.

3 Add the butter to the saucepan and stir in the onion, celery, red pepper and fennel. Leave them to stew gently for 15 mins, stirring occasionally and checking that they do not burn or stick to the pan. Mix in the garlic, saffron and paprika. After 2 mins, pour in the red wine and tomatoes.

4 Season with a pinch of salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Return the chicken to the saucepan and simmer for 30 mins, stirring from time to time to make sure it does not stick. Allow the mixture to cool, then take the chicken pieces out of the sauce.

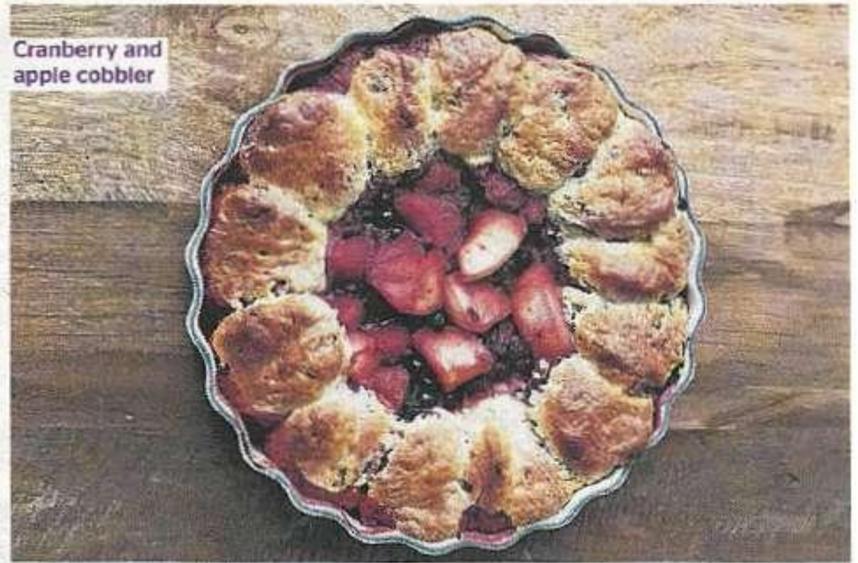
5 Pull the chicken meat from the bones with your fingers, discarding the skin and bones. Cut the meat into bite-sized pieces and stir it back into the sauce. Season the mixture to taste. Pour it into a pie dish and set aside to cool slightly.

6 Roll out the pastry so that it will cover the pie dish. Brush the rim of the dish with a little beaten egg and place the pastry over the pie. Trim the edges, putting aside any trimmings, and brush the top of the pastry with a little egg. Press the edges down using the tines of a fork.

7 Cut pastry shapes from the leftover pastry and decorate the top of the pie. Cut a hole in the top to let steam escape and brush it all over with the rest of the egg.

8 Bake in a preheated 220C/gas 7 oven for 40 mins. Check after 15 mins. If the pastry is turning golden, cover it with aluminium foil and continue baking.

Cranberry and apple cobbler



Cornish pasties

Makes 4 large dinner-size pasties

Ingredients

Pastry

125g butter, chilled and diced

125g lard, diced

Good pinch of salt

500g standard plain flour

5 tbsp cold water

Filling

450g skirt or chuck steak, finely chopped

1 large onion, finely chopped

3 medium potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced

200g swede, peeled and finely diced

1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

1 tsp salt

Glaze

1 egg, beaten

Method

1 In a bowl, rub the butter, lard and salt into the flour with your fingertips until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Mix in the cold water to make a firm dough. Knead for 2 mins on a lightly floured surface. Cut into four equal pieces, mould each into a ball, cover with clingfilm and chill for 20 mins.

2 Mix together the filling ingredients in a large bowl and set aside. Roll out each piece of dough on a lightly floured surface until large enough to make a 23cm-diameter circle – use a large dinner plate to trim it to shape.

3 Pack a quarter of the filling in the centre of each circle. Brush the pastry all round the edge with beaten egg.

4 Draw up opposite sides so that they meet at the top, then pinch and crimp them together to seal. Lift the pasties on to a nonstick baking tray, cut two slits in the top of each with a sharp knife and brush with the remaining egg to glaze.

5 Bake in a preheated 200C/gas 6 oven for 10 mins, then lower the heat to 180C/gas 4 and bake for a further 45 mins until golden.

Cranberry and apple cobbler

Makes a 25cm cobbler, serving

6-8 people

Ingredients

Fruit filling

1kg cooking apples, such as Granny

Smith or Bramley

350g frozen cranberries or mixed summer berries

Zest and juice of 2 oranges

¼ tsp Chinese five spice powder

3 whole star anise

Scone topping

220g self-raising flour

Good pinch of salt

55g caster sugar

55g butter, chilled

100g dried cranberries, roughly chopped

165ml milk

Glaze

1 large egg beaten with 1 tbsp water, for egg wash

Method

1 Peel, core and thickly slice the apples. Place in a large saucepan with the cranberries, orange zest and juice, Chinese five spice and star anise over a medium heat and very gently poach for approximately 15 mins until tender. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. Discard the star anise before using. This filling can be made a day in advance and kept in the refrigerator overnight.

2 To make the scone topping, place the flour, salt and sugar into a large bowl and rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add the dried cranberries and toss through, then add the milk and mix with a wooden spoon or blunt knife to achieve a soft, sticky dough.

3 Tip out the dough on to a lightly floured surface and roll out to 2cm thick. Using a 5cm-round cookie cutter, cut out circles of dough and set aside.

4 Spoon the fruit filling into a 25cm shallow, round, ovenproof baking dish and arrange the scone circles on top around the edge of the dish, slightly overlapping each other but leaving an open circular gap in the middle. Brush the circles with egg wash. Bake in a preheated 220C/gas 7 oven for 20-25 mins or until the scone circles are golden-brown in colour.

5 Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 10 mins on a cooling rack before serving.

Recipes taken from *Pie* by Dean Brettschneider (Jacqui Small, £25), available for £18 with free p&p from the Times Bookshop on 0845 2712134; thetimes.co.uk/bookshop



freeze for 15 mins. Line the pastry case with baking paper, fitting it snugly into the corners and up the sides. Fill with baking beans or rice and bake in a preheated 200C/gas 6 oven for 15-20 mins until the pastry has set or turned pale brown in colour. Remove the baking paper and weights, and place the tin back in the oven for 5 mins.

2 To make the filling, heat the oil in a large saucepan, then add the onion, garlic and water. Cover and cook over gentle heat for about an hour or until the onion is meltingly soft but not coloured. Stir occasionally to prevent ingredients catching and burning. Remove from the heat and let cool.

3 Blanch the potatoes in boiling, salted water for 1 minute, then drain and set aside. Remove the skins from the sausages. Heat a non-stick frying pan and add the sausagemeat, breaking it up with a fork or wooden spoon as it browns. After about 5 mins, stir in the flour, tomato purée, sun-dried tomatoes, chilli, herbs, salt and pepper. Cook for a further 5 mins, then stir in the potato.

4 Spoon the mixture into the pastry case and dot with small spoonfuls of the mascarpone and cooked onion. Rough it up a little to give it a rustic look. Bake in a preheated 220C/gas 7 oven for 25-30 mins or until golden.